

Saga of the Name “Squash Bend”

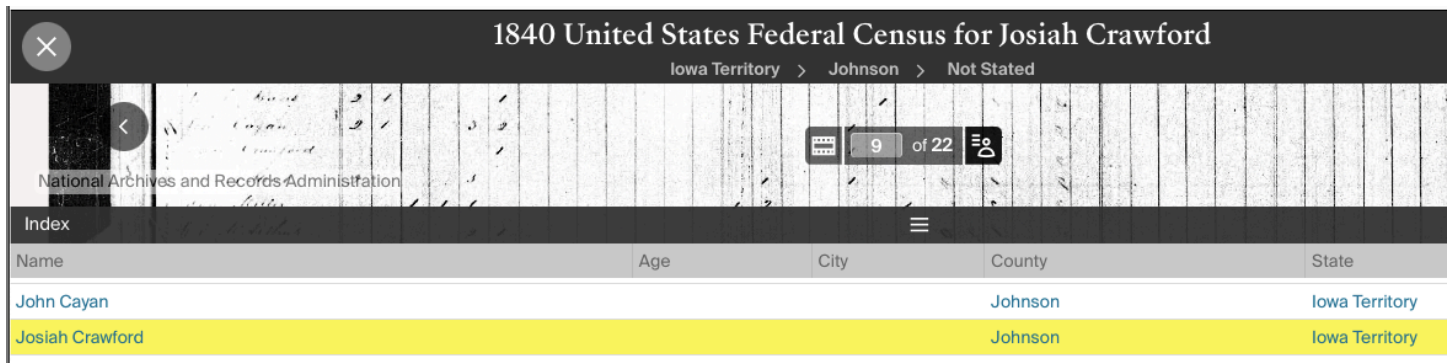
containing evidence from many sources that Dr. (Josiah? or William?) Crawford was a real person, how the name Squash Bend came and went and who really suggested the name North Liberty!

My interest in this was roused when a recent post on Facebook shared information that was new to me and I wanted to track down the source of the information to verify it, since part of it somewhat contradicts prior information about Squash Bend, namely that the town name “North Liberty” was chosen by the Czechs and Austrians.

As you read the information I discovered in chronological order oldest to newest, you will see it is a little like playing the game “telephone” where each person who repeats prior information makes little changes that sometimes causes the meaning to change slightly.

1840 United States Federal Census

Lists a Josiah Crawford In Johnson, Iowa Territory. No conclusive evidence this was “our man” but sure seems likely.



Name	Age	City	County	State
John Cayan			Johnson	Iowa Territory
Josiah Crawford			Johnson	Iowa Territory

1846 Acts and Resolutions Passed at the Several Sessions of the Territorial Legislature of Iowa 1840-1846. Again, no conclusive evidence this was “our man” but sure seems likely.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=eFg4AAAAIAAI&pg=PA701&lpg=PA701&dq=Approved,+January+17th,+1846.+Isabella+Crawford&source=bl&ots=j9SdPw--0I&sig=ACfU3U15lIQtMqVtRa-xijtgd3BHgc0mLQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjzq8n9372FAxV7IYkEHW8oBv44ChDoAXoECAUQAw#v=onepage&q=Approved%2C%20January%2017th%2C%201846.%20Isabella%20Crawford&f=false>

[83] CHAPTER 92. ISABELLA CRAWFORD.

AN ACT to authorize Isabella-Crawford, to convey certain real estate.

Be it enacted by the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Iowa.

SECTION 1. Mrs. Crawford is empowered to sell husbands estate and make deed to purchaser. That Isabella Crawford, of Johnson county, be and she is hereby authorized, to rent, or to sell and convey all the real estate belonging to her deceased husband, Josiah Crawford, at the time of his death, in said Johnson County, and that the said Isabella Crawford, is hereby empowered to execute, under her hand and seal, deed or deeds of conveyance, for said real estate, with covenants of general warranty.

Sec. 2. In force from passage. This act to take fleet and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved, Jannary 17th, 1846.

1850 Diaries of Bryan Dennis (archived at University of Iowa Library) PAPERS OF THE HARDING FAMILY - Collection Dates: 1840 -- 1975 1 linear ft. I include this listing to show that all the comments attributed to Bryan Dennis probably have a written first-hand record in the diaries. I have not viewed them myself.

Bryan Francis Dennis Diaries:

1850, transcript only.

1891 -- 1894, three volumes and transcript.

1896 -- 1905, three volumes.

1906, one volume.

"Reminiscences of Grandfather Dennis" (Bryan Francis Dennis), 1840 -- 1841.

1860 Federal Census - This census for Penn Township lists both Jacob and Frank (Francis?) Bowman families, both of whom have a daughter named Martha. One was reported to be 15 and one was reported to be 17. Both men have wives named Margaret. How confusing is that?

1860 United States Federal Census for Martha Bowman											
Iowa > Johnson > Penn											
Dwelling No.	Family No.	Name	Age	Sex	Color	Occupation	Real Estate	Personal Estate	Birthplace	Married	Attended
		Armande "	29	F					dy		
39		Frank Bowman	39	M		Farm	5000	600	Penn ^a		
		Margaret "	37	F					dy		
		Martha "	17	F					dy		1
		Samuel "	14	M					Iowa		1
		Margaret "	10	F					dy		1
		Rosa "	6	F					dy		1
		Samuel Brant							Penn ^a		

1860 United States Federal Census for Jacob Bouman											
Iowa > Johnson > Penn											
Dwelling No.	Family No.	Name	Age	Sex	Color	Occupation	Real Estate	Personal Estate	Birthplace	Married	Attended
7	1466 1580	Jacob Bowman	45	M		Farm	11000	600	Penn ^a		
		Margaret "	40	F					do		
		Martha "	15	F					do		
		Catharine "	14	F					do		1
		John "	12	M					Iowa		1
		Mary E "	10	M					do		1
		Emma "	5	F					do		
		Amos "	18	M		Farm			Penn ^a		

1883 History of Johnson County Iowa, Containing a History of the County, and its Townships, Cities and Villages from 1836-1882. Iowa City, 1883. p. 624-625

Origin of Name of Squash Bend

Bryan Dennis relates "Dr. Josiah Crawford, from whom the name of Squash Bend (now called North Liberty) originated, lived in this township in the spring and summer of 1842. He was a quack doctor of the original type. Being hard-pushed for a living, he moved to Sugar Bottom, in Penn township, and occupied a shanty vacated by a bachelor named Waterson, a farmer from Illinois. Waterson made a claim out on the prairie, now a part of the Donner farm. He broke up a few acres and planted sod corn, pumpkins and squashes, which was the sole subsistence of the doctor's family for four or five months. The whole crop used was packed in sacks by an old man by the name of Pettis a distance of three or four miles. It occupied nearly his whole time. Crawford spent his time in visiting his "ager" patients, and in the woods gathering "roots and yarbs". He was very fond of the good things of this life, and never in a hurry to leave his patients as long as there was prospect of grub ahead. The family at home, meanwhile, enjoyed their change of diet, from roasting ears and squash to squash and roasting ears. Pettis said, "the board done first rate, but it was mighty hard work to get it."

1912 Iowa City Republican January 30, 1912

Report of an interesting trip by car on the ice of the Iowa River, with measurements for distance to Squash Bend mentioned. This is included to show that even by 1912, people still used the term "squash bend" even though the town had long had the name of North Liberty. In this case, the term refers to the specific bend of the river, not really the town itself.

IC Republican 1/30/1912

**44 MILE TRIP
MADE UPON ICE**

**FRANK CARSON MAKES NEW RUN
ON IOWA RIVER**

Distances Between Various Points—Is 24.15 Miles From Mid-River Park to Iowa City—Automobile Went One Mile Above the Interurban Bridge.

Frank Carson and party duplicated and almost doubled their recent automobile trip on the ice of the Iowa river, by making a run from Butler's landing to a point one mile above the interurban bridge, and back. They traveled 44.70 miles on the ice. Those in the party were Mr. Carson, C. S. Welch, H. K. Morton and John Morton.

Readings were taken from the speedometer, and distances established between numerous points of interest along the river.

It has long been a disputed question as to the distance between Mid River park and Iowa City, by water. It is just 24.15 miles from Joe Wray's crossing, at the upper end of the park, to Fitzgerald's boathouse in Iowa City. From Robert's Ferry bridge to Iowa City is 26.45 miles.

The automobile's speedometer checked to a ninth of a mile with the previous survey from Butler's Landing to Mehafe's bridge, so it is certain that distances are correct along the whole route, as measured along the middle of the river.

The Republican herewith presents the distances from various points, adding the distance from Coralville to Butler's landing in order to get distance from the dam. It is 2 3/4 miles from Coralville to the Butler's Landing bridge.

In order to get the distance from Fitzgerald's boathouse, 2 3/4 miles should be added to the following distances:

	Miles
From Coralville to	
Mehaffey's Bridge	10.9
Beginning of Squash Bend	13.
High rock on left hand	14.5
Spring on left hand	14.7
Scales' Bend Bridge	16.6
Battleship Rock on right	17.1
High Rock on left	18.3
Hawk's Hollow, end of bend	18.4
Cedar Rocks on right	19.5
Mid-River park spring	20.6
Joe Wray's landing	20.9
Rifle Range Pit	22.2
Roberts' Ferry bridge	23.2
Interurban bridge	23.6
Cut off, old river bed on right	24.6

In this table, references to right and left mean right and left going upstream.

The table shows that the distance around Squash Bend, or Scales' Bend, is 5.4 miles distances between Coralville and Mehafe's bridge have been known for some time, and are shown by signs on trees and rocks. The distances given above are known for the first time, and will prove an eye opener for some of the gentry who claim, for instance, that it is 40 miles from Iowa City to Roberts' Ferry bridge. This table should be kept for reference by all who are interested in distances along the river.

1913 Leading events in Johnson County, Iowa, history c1912-1913 by Aurner, Clarence Ray, 1861-

THE BOHEMIANS IN JOHNSON COUNTY By B. S(h)imek (I believe this passage might be the inspiration of the statement made later about the naming of North Liberty by the Austrians and Czechs.)

The Bohemians, or as they should properly be called, the C(h)echs,* constitute approximately one-fifth of the population of Johnson County. They occupy the greater part of the northern tier of townships, and their colony extends into Oxford, Madison, and Penn townships and across Newport township into the northern and eastern part of Iowa City....

THE NORTHERN COLONY

The first permanent settlement was made in the northern part of the county and centered in Jefferson township in this county and College township in Linn county. The majority of the older settlers in this

section came in the years 1854 to 1856, but stragglers followed for many years after. These people left their native land during the period of political disturbances which followed the revolutionary outbreaks of 1848 and 1849, the period of great awakening among European nations. **The oppressed of all nations were demanding their rights and the Bohemians, who had borne the oppression of the Austrian government for several generations, joined in the general uprising. The partial collapse of this effort made exiles of many of those who had taken part in it, and the industrial depression which followed caused many more to leave their native land....These people were in part political refugees...or they were seeking relief from the industrial oppression and depression from which they had suffered in their own country...** The privilege of free citizenship, which had been denied to them in their native country, was so highly prized that few permitted delay in securing it. But they felt the need of a more thorough understanding of their new duties, which had been assumed most seriously, and for this purpose the society was organized. Its object as set forth in the records was twofold: 1. The maintenance of our Slavonic honor among Americans. 2. Honorable participation in the political affairs of this country.

1929 Iowa City Press Citizen March 8, 1929

A Fact a Day About Iowa City, A Change in Name

One of the early day representatives of a pioneer Iowa City family, Bryan Dennis, now no more, told a good story of historical type, 50 years ago, explaining the old name of North Liberty. That name, he declared, used to be "Squash Bend." (In later years, "North Bend" has become much more familiar to citizens of the Twentieth Century, as a factor in Penn and Madison history). Mr. Dennis declared that Josiah Crawford, who "practiced" back in 1842, styled himself "Doc" Crawford whether or no he possessed a diploma from an early day college, long before S.U.I had a medical department. His practice was not any too large, and therefore he found the out-go bigger than the income, some months. Accordingly, he removed to "Sugar Bottom," and took up his abode in a shack. A farmer from Illinois, named Waterson, had occupied this hut, and Waterson removed to his newly-staked claim on a tract that subsequently passed to the Danner family. Mr. Dennis stated that the Illinois man planted, among other things, pumpkins and squashes, and these, when "harvested," were carried in sacks several miles by an old man. Upon these squashes "Dr." Crawford and his family lived almost wholly for months. The doctor, himself, however, gathered "yarbs" and roots in the "primeval forests" of Johnson County, and brewed his "medicines," which, in turn, he served to victims of "chills and fever," ague, and the like, at their homes, where he was a guest for many hours at a time, as he enjoyed being with his patients-who often showed their kind and generous dispositions by urging him to "stay to dinner." Mr. Dennis recalled that, in the meantime, the family at the Crawford home varied its menus, "from squash and roastin' ears, to roastin' ears and squash." From the persistence of squash on the bill of fare, however, the name of the vegetable "stuck," and the village of "Squashtown" was so christened, years before the coinage of the more poetical present day name of one of the best little towns in Iowa.

1931 Iowa City Press Citizen May 2, 1931

A Fact A Day About Iowa City: Family Food

"...While the Beaconsfield claim was not made by neighbors of Josiah Crawford, a pioneer, whose habits gave an early name to "Squash Bend," which, in due time, became more euphoniously known as North Liberty, Crawford was credited with certain Anglo-Saxon habits. Memoirs of Bryan Dennis show that the people in Crawford's neighborhood were interested in "Doc's" method of providing his family with food, when his practice was slim. Crawford, seemingly, had no real medical license, and practiced by courtesy of his faith in himself and such kindred confidence as he could inspire in casual patients. He took possession of a shack in "Sugar Bottom," Penn, in 1842. He only cultivated a few acres, and raised squashes, pumpkins, and corn. The first-named vegetable explains the title that was devised for "Squash Bend." "Doc" Crawford also worked in the "forests, primeval," gathering "yarbs" and roots, for his compounds and potions. The Crawford crop was delivered in sacks by "Old Man Pettis," who is credited with saying that the Crawford board was good, but "mighty hard to get." The Crawford family, for four or five months in a year, lived on nothing else, in the main, but the doctor's "squash and roasting ears,"

with “roasting ears and squash, for a change,” according to Mr. Dennis’ stories. Whether or no, “Doc” cured his confiding patients of their “fever ‘n’ ager” and other “ills that flesh is heir to,” with his boiled and stewed products of nature, history does not chronicle. At any rate, the imagination of his patients helped.”

1931 Iowa City Press Citizen July 15, 1931

New York Paper Mourns Passing of Picturesque Names; Cites North Liberty

Raising the question “Are American place names too much of a piece?; an editorial recently printed in the New York Sun tells of the change from the picturesque name of “Squash Bend,” to the present town of North Liberty, in Johnson County. The editorial, in speaking of the present town of North Liberty, states: “Squash Bend in Johnson County was named for Josiah Crawford, who settled there in 1842 and proceeded to live on a diet of pumpkin and squash. In 1857 a post office was established there and the sensitive residents managed to get the name of the town changed to North Liberty. The editorial in the New York newspaper is reprinted as follows: **Lost Squash Bend**”

“Are American place names too much of a piece? It would seem so when a whole article in American speech can be devoted to a discussion of the place named Liberty, in Iowa. Allen Walker Reed, the writer of the article, has discovered that in 1845, seven years after the creation of Iowa territory, there were 44 Liberties and 78 Unions in the territory. It was in the same year that a Scottish traveler in the South observed that the name of Liberty had been given to a county in Georgia in which 5,500 of the 7,200 inhabitants were slaves. Inevitable as the name of Liberty may have seemed to pioneers in a fresh country, it displaced names with more tang and individuality. Liberty, in Clark County, was once Hickory Point. The post office of Liberty disappeared in 1903; the town of 850 inhabitants remains. Squash Bend, in Johnson County, was named for Josiah Crawford, who settled there in 1842 and proceeded to live on a diet of pumpkins and squash. in 1857, *a post office was established there and the sensitive residents managed to get the name of the town changed to North Liberty.* But for the regulations of the post office Department forbidding the establishment of more than one post office of a name in a state, the abolitionists who settled Iowa would have dotted the state with liberties. Liberty Center, in Warren County, was named by abolitionists in 1842 and was known as Liberty until the establishment of a post office in 1865. South Liberty was laid out in Johnson County in 1857 West Liberty, in Muscatine County, was founded in 1839; Libertyville, in Jefferson County, in 1840. At one time or another in the 40 years that followed creation of the territory, 20 of Iowa's 99 counties contained a liberty. Just before the Civil War West Liberty, New Liberty, North Liberty and South Liberty lay within a radius of 50 miles. The United States mails today carry letters to Liberty Center, Libertyville, North liberty, New Liberty and West Liberty, in Iowa. Other Libertarians dwell in the land of the tall corn and live in villages whose names bespeak their devotion to liberty, but the post office department compels them to get their mail under another name. In the meantime there must be lovers of the picturesque who mourn for the lost village of Squash Bend.

1941 Iowa City Press Citizen March 22, 1941

Let's just toss in another Dr. Crawford. Is it referring to Josiah? Was Josiah's real name William? Was William a different person? Was it a typo?

Iowa City Press-Citizen
Sat, Mar 22, 1941 ·Page 4

The first two wed were Nathaniel Scales and Nancy Crozier (August 30, 1842). Dr. William Crawford was the first physician.

1950 Iowa City Press Citizen March 6, 1950

A Fact a Day About Iowa City – Squash Bend by J.E.R.

By various names, North Liberty and environing territory have been known throughout the major part of the 19th century, and in the 20th. As we have herein before related, “among these were “Big Bend”, ‘North Bend’, ‘Big Bottom’, and ‘Sugar Bottom’, and the like.” Still another “Bend” was used in naming North Liberty, more than 100 years ago, and the appellation clung to the splendid little hamlet and modern enterprising town for decades after its quaint christening. According to the memoirs of Bryan Dennis, a

brother of Captain Isaac V. Dennis, a 22nd Iowa warrior and officer, the Hamletian “thereby hangs a tale” applied well to the christening of the tract that was to become the site of North Liberty. Mr. Dennis told of the residence of Josiah Crawford. Either a bona fide “M.D.,” or a practitioner, through the courtesy of a trusting new community, none too well, if at all, supplied with medical and surgical experts, that pioneer Aesculapian “hung out his shingle” in Johnson County, in 1842, and sought practice in Penn and Clear Creek Township. He removed to Sugar Bottom from his first settlement, and found it very, very hard to make a living. This was true, even in an era when “fever n’ ague” was wont to invade household after household. This made the need of a doctor pressing, when oldtime household remedies failed to get rid of the “chills and fever” or other pioneer ills. Dr. Crawford, said Mr. Dennis, devoted much time to questing, and digging out, herbs and roots, to provide botanical remedies of real or fancied value in whipping ordinary ailments into subjection. The “injuns” of territorial Iowa did the same thing, and are believed to have cured many a brave, squaw and papoose with such “near to Nature” remedies. Whether or no, these natural medicaments served the purpose for which they were designed, by the man who prescribed them, Mr. Dennis did not testify when he told the story, but he did aver that the hardest times our pioneers faced were rarely as hard as those that met the territorial “Doc.” The practitioner lived in a shanty, raised some “sod corn”, and a pumpkin and squash crop. The entire harvest was “toted” in sacks by an aged settler, named Pettis. These products were all the commissary department of the nearly bankrupt doctor could provide his family, for several months. Semi-humorously, semi-seriously, Mr. Dennis described the menu as ranging from “squash and roasting ears” to “roasting ears and squash.” The old toiler who harvested it vowed that the “eatin done fust-rate, but it was durned hard work to get it,” or words to that effect. And thus “Squash Bend” was satirically christened, with a barnacle-like name that clung to it tenaciously until the more euphemious and now highly-honored “North Liberty” drove it out of existence forever, save as a memory of territorial pioneers, if any, can now be living.

1953 Iowa City Press Citizen June 12, 1953

A Fact a Day About Iowa City – Succoring Squash by J.E.R.

....Bryan Dennis is the narrator, not the subject, of the genesis of the christening of North Liberty. That benaming was preceded by a quainter and less poetic name, according to Mr. Dennis, who told his story, nearly three-quarters of a century ago. He said the bustling, hustling town of today was formerly called “Squash Bend.” And “thereby hangs a tale,” as Philosopher-Cynic Jacques remarked in “As You Like It.” Modern residents of Penn and Madison townships well recall the “Bend,” at any rate, as “North Bend” is familiar to them and thousands of other Iowa City and Johnson County people. According to the Dennis reminiscence, a certain Josiah Crawford, a doctor (either a degreed physician and surgeon, or a self-styled “medico,” merely,) was the man who laid the foundation for the unauthorized and unofficial christening, “Squash Bend.” Be that as it may, Josiah set up the practice of his alleged profession, 111 years ago in what is now North Liberty. Unfortunately for “Doc” Crawford, he was not the proud possessor of a roster of patients as long as the list of diamond heroes in the “Baseball Hall of Fame,” at Cooperstown, N.Y. James Fenimore Cooper’s “old home town” Thus it came about that Crawford’s income was not sufficient to provide even a decent living, at certain periods of the year. Therefore, he removed to “Sugar Bottom” and opened his “office” in a rude hut. An Illinois farmer, one Waterson, formerly lived in it, but he staked a more alluring claim (afterwards part of the Danner family’s realty_ and he began to raise pumpkins, squashes, and produce. An old man, he “lugged” these edibles miles to the rather indigent “doctor,” who subsisted almost wholly on squash. The menus were not royal in type, but Crawford did well enough on them to keep up his strength, and to permit him to wander through the dense woods of Johnson County, gathering herbs and roots, from which he brewed his good medicines or nostrums, as the case might be, for the cure of chills and fever, and ague – frequent, if not popular, ailments of the era. Frequently, he became a guest (as many of our pioneer school teachers were) of patients, or parents, respectively, when meal time rolled round. It is certain that the pioneer doctor was not compelled to feast on “squash” solely at such times, regardless of the viands served his family, at the shack. Mr. Dennis said the Crawford menu at home ranged from “squash to roasting ears,” and from “roasting ears to squash” At any rate, the squash legend became so universally known and so widely accepted as true, that the

new-born village was thereupon christened "Squashtown," and long that rather unpleasant name persisted, before the fine new name, synonym of freedom and progress, "North Liberty" came into being, to live forever.

1976 Iowa City Press Citizen October 8, 1975

What's Your History IQ - Towns of Johnson County, North Liberty by Irving Weber

"Squash Bend" hardly qualifies as a glamour name for a town, and certainly not one a stone's throw from the future "Main Street of America", the four-laned Interstate Highway number 80, just to it's south. Squash Bend was the name attached to the future North Liberty, in 1842, by "Dr." Josiah Crawford because of the abundance of squash grown in the area. A slightly different version of the legend states Crawford, who was a botanical doctor, existed on a diet of squash and pumpkin and for this reason the town was named. Botanical doctors are occasionally mentioned in the early history of Iowa but the exact therapy they practiced is hazy, probably the use of herbs, and medicines of vegetable origin. Following his initial blaze of publicity and fame, nothing more is heard of "Dr." Crawford. Big Bottom, Big Bend, North Bend followed as names for North Liberty; and like Squash Bend the names stemmed from the local topography. While it is not generally realized, the area lays in the bend of the Iowa River as its course turns from west-east to flow north-south. Miss Martha Stoner, teacher of the first grade school in the area, had the pleasure of naming the town North Liberty, when it was laid out in 1857. The name no doubt influenced by North Bend. When North Liberty received its name in 1857, an editorial appeared in the New York Sun by Albert Walter Reed lamenting the elimination of the colorful names, with a local tang - of towns like Squash Bend - for more prosaic names like North Liberty. Th editorial goes on to comment that in 1845, seven years after Johnson County was organized the Territory of Iowa already had forty-four towns using the name of Liberty with varying prefixes; and some seventy-eight towns using Union...."

1990 Iowa City Press Citizen September 22, 1990

What's In a Name: Town History by Irving Weber

"...North Liberty The town of North Liberty was known as Squash Bend in 1842. It was so named because a botanical doctor, Dr. Josiah Crawford, raised many squash in the area, and subsisted on a diet of squash and pumpkin. Big Bottom, Big Bend and North Bend followed as names, and all stemmed from the nearby Iowa River, which makes a large bend in this area. Miss Martha Stoner, first-grade teacher, had the honor of giving the town its name when North Liberty was officially platted. When North Liberty was named, the New York Sun ran an editorial lamenting the elimination of colorful names like Squash Bend. The editorial commented that in 1845, the territory of Iowa already had 45 towns using the name of Liberty." (Note: My notes say the town was named by Martha Bowman but I have not been able to track down whether Martha Bowman might have married a Stoner or some source other than my dad to verify Weber's claim. You will see the conflicting accounts from the history books below)

from 1882 history of Johnson County

the school graded. The first graded school was taught by Miss Martha J. Bowman. The house built in 1843 answered for school and all public

from the Aurner 1912 Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History

his way "west." ¹⁸⁴ The township was named Penn in honor of the founder of Pennsylvania, the motion for that name having been made by Francis Bowman, and it may be well to mention here that it was Francis and Margaret Bowman, Patrick and Anna Murphy who held the title to the lands upon which North Liberty is platted. The village was laid out in October,

Interesting to note that the source (265) referred to was the article by Nicholas Zeller which actually said this:

ded. The first graded school was taught by Miss Martha J. Bowman. The house built in 1843 answered for school and

erected in this vicinity, of North Liberty. Later, in 1865, a two-story frame house was planned for the village, which furnished room enough to partially grade the school, and Miss Elizabeth Bowman is said to have first taught this new school.²⁶⁵ It appears further that the two buildings stood on

So my point is that it is difficult to pin down the actual name of the person who named North Liberty. If anyone can solve these conflicting reports, I would love to know of it. Curious that even though they indicated their source, they changed Martha to Elizabeth in their text.

1994 Iowa City Press Citizen August 22, 1994

The Irving Weber School What's in a name? For schools a textbook of history by Irving Weber

"....North Liberty, founded in 1857, originally was called "Squash Bend" - the "Squash" came from so many squash being grown by a botanical doctor; the "Bend" refers to the big bend the Iowa River makes as it flows east, then south to Coralville and Iowa City. The name "Squash Bend" was not popular with the local citizenry and a prize was offered for a better name. A school teacher won the prize with "North Liberty." At the time, 44 towns had some "Liberty" connection, and in this area there was West Liberty, South Liberty and New Liberty."

2008 Quad City Times June 4, 2008 Bill Wundram (now deceased)

It's no wonder that North Liberty carries that name. One of its first names was Squash Bottom, but that didn't appeal to the more enterprising settlers. Some of them were immigrant Austrians and Czechs who drifted down from Cedar Rapids. They had been under the thumb of the Habsburgs, who held a tight rein on their native lands and did not allow land ownership except to the privileged.

The Czechs and their Austrian counterparts, seeking a new freedom in America, believed that Liberty - and later North Liberty - was a far more proper and patriotic name than Squash Bottom.

2024 West Liberty Index, April 12, 2024 Phyllis Owens Sterba

<https://www.westlibertyindex.com/stories/liberty-popular-name-for-local-towns,84089>

It's no surprise that North Liberty, Iowa, with a population of 13,300, located in Johnson County north of Iowa City, carries the name. One of its first names was Squash Bottom, but that didn't appeal to the more enterprising settlers. Some of them were immigrant Austrians and Czechs who had drifted down from Cedar Rapids. They'd been under the thumb of the Habsburgs, who held a tight rein on their native lands and did not allow land ownership, except to the privileged.

The Czechs and their Austrian counterparts, seeking a new freedom in America, believed that Liberty, and later North Liberty, was a far more proper and patriotic name than Squash Bottom! And thus, North Liberty was incorporated in 1857. (note; Actually incorporated in 1913. It was only platted in 1857)

So ends my research about the name Squash Bend, and who chose the name of North Liberty. Sorry, no indisputable evidence of whether it was the Czechs and Austrians, Martha Bowman, Martha Stoner, or an unnamed school teacher who won a prize. History can be a difficult thing to verify. Even when there is written evidence such as the diaries of Bryan Dennis, we all know how easy it is to enhance a good story in the telling.

If you feel you have something to add to this research, please send it to jbelknap2@mac.com